The Youth Bulge in PNG - Challenges and Opportunities

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• The youth bulge is a significant challenge for PNG.
• But also represents a big opportunity.
• What happens next depends on the policies and decisions of the government and its partners.
PNG's Population Pyramid

Fig 1. The Youth Bulge in PNG
The Opportunity of the Youth Bulge

• A large, healthy young population will help the economy grow.
• Young people have unique, creative perspectives and ideas.
• Young people intrinsically understand new technologies, and readily adopt the new.
• Developing the human resources of the country will pay dividends for decades
The Challenges

• A large youth population will put pressure on service delivery, particularly in education, health and justice.

• The literature shows a strong link between ↑ in population of young men and ↑ in forms of organised violence.

• However, the exact interaction between the youth bulge and other factors that contribute to the likelihood of political violence requires further investigation, particularly in PNG.
A Caveat…

- The challenges outlined previously will only become a reality if:
- Young people are not given the space to engage in significant decision-making processes about the things that impact on them and that they care about.
Young people are increasingly frustrated with the current situation and feel marginalised.

- The culture of leadership in PNG tends to marginalise young people.
- The colonial Australian administration was quite authoritarian and that model fused with traditional understandings of leadership.
- Common sentiment: “Young people are leaders are leaders of tomorrow and need to ‘wait their turn’”

So why is this important?
However, there are some signs of change

• Young people are responding to their challenges by creating organic coalitions for change.
• The idea of political leadership is changing as more young people put their hand up to participate.
• This new conception of leadership emphasises the attributes of candidates rather than their status in the community.
So: how can we ensure that young people become a force for good in the development of PNG?

- The government should recognise the voice of young people.
- The NYDA must step up.
- The National Youth Policy must incorporate youth participation strategies.
- Organisations working within PNG - government, private sector and NGOs - must develop strategies to work more effectively with young people. “Nothing about us without us”
In summary

• The youth bulge is a significant challenge for PNG. But only if young people are not given the space to engage in significant decision-making processes about the things that impact on them and that they care about.

• It also represents a big opportunity. An investment in young people can drive the sustainable development of PNG.

• What happens next depends on the policies and decisions of the government and its partners. Youth participation practice can be an effective tool to increase young people's engagement in politics and society.
Thank you

Read the full report at: www.oaktree.org

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